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68th PLENARY MEETING

Thursday, 2 December 1993 at 10 a.m.

NEW YORK

President: Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana)

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 34 *(continued)*

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

(a) REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/48/522, A/48/607)

(b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/48/L.32)

Mr. KEATING (New Zealand): There are indeed real grounds this year for unprecedented optimism as we address the situation in the Middle East. New Zealand joins others in warmly welcoming the recent dramatic breakthrough in the peace process begun in Madrid two years ago. The agreement on mutual recognition and the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as the Agreement on the Common Agenda signed between Israel and Jordan, represent political understandings of historic importance. We congratulate all those involved, including the Government of Norway. This Organization can draw fresh encouragement that the objective to which it has so long committed itself - a just and lasting peace in the region in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - is both practicable and achievable. Continuing courage and determination by all the parties will be required to carry the process forward.

We believe that these developments set a new direction, but they are only part of the wider fabric of peace which the region needs. We hope that they will soon be followed by similar movement in negotiations between Israel and Syria, and Israel and Lebanon. For true stability all parties to this long-standing conflict must contribute to, and share the benefits of, a comprehensive settlement.

After so many years of bitterness and hostility, no one should underestimate the enormous difficulties that both the Israeli Government and the Palestinian leaders are facing in their ongoing negotiations. Their commitment must not fail now. Notwithstanding their new accord there are real problems, marked by continuing violence and tension. It is vital that Israelis and Palestinians alike halt the slide towards perilous instability by putting destructive disputes behind them.

The problems ahead are many and complex. They will undoubtedly continue to absorb younger generations of Palestinians and Israelis. If long-cherished hopes for peace and justice are to be maintained, the negotiators of today must keep up both direction and momentum. There must be a sense of realism.

The support of the international community will be crucial. The Palestinian people need help quickly to meet the challenges of self-government, to repair and develop their infrastructural needs and establish the economic engine of their future. In this respect we wish to record our great appreciation of and respect for the work being accomplished in the working groups of the so-called multilateral track. They represent true partnership between many countries. The issues are crucial to the stability and development of the whole region.

New Zealand has always sought to encourage progress towards a negotiated settlement. We remain firmly supportive of the Middle East process and we will continue

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our dialogue with Israel and with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), as well as with the other parties principally involved. We recognize the very valuable assistance that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has provided to the region and we will continue to give it our support as well.

More generally, New Zealand remains concerned about the huge and destabilizing flow of armaments into the Middle East. There can be no lasting peace and security in the region without a halt to this trade and the promotion of broadly based arms-reduction efforts. There is sadly still a long way to go before a sufficiently improved climate can be created to translate such goals as a Middle East zone free of all weapons of mass destruction into a reality. We believe that efforts towards greater transparency, and therefore confidence, among the States of the region remain vital building blocks for substantive arms control and disarmament measures and for lasting peace. We continue to support and to follow with interest the ongoing dialogue within the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security which was established as part of the Madrid framework.

Mr. AWAD (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: Since 1970, the General Assembly has continued to consider the item relating to the situation in the Middle East at every annual session and has continued to reaffirm, time after time, that peace in the Middle East is an indivisible whole that should be based on a just and comprehensive solution to the problem in conformity with the relevant United Nations resolutions in a manner that will ensure the complete withdrawal of Israel from the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967.

The convening of the Madrid Peace Conference more than two years ago was an historic opportunity to achieve the aspired-for peace on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which are fully binding resolutions that must be implemented by all the parties to the dispute under the United Nations Charter. Notwithstanding, however, the peace process continues to be stalled as a result of the intransigence of the Israeli side that insists on distorting the Madrid points of reference which are clear enough since they are based on the logic of international legality and the need to achieve peace in the Middle East region as a world objective that is imposed by the necessities of the post-cold-war era so as to put paid to dangerous hotbeds of conflict, particularly since the Arab-Israeli conflict is one of the oldest and most dangerous of such conflicts.

The manner in which Israel leaps over the fixed elements and the principles of the peace process has dashed the hopes generated by the Madrid Conference in reaching a just and comprehensive solution. Over the two years of peace negotiations in Madrid and Washington not one single position taken by Israel has led anyone to the belief that Israel is serious in its handling of the peace process and the fixed objective of that process, namely the establishment of a comprehensive and just peace, based on the implementation of Security Council resolutions and the land-for-peace principle. To the contrary, all Israel's positions fall under the heading of rejecting the peace of the Madrid formula and of creating one obstacle after another with the aim of stalling the peace process and preventing the eleven rounds of negotiation from making any progress towards the achievement of peace.

The peace process, that began in Madrid in 1991, was launched with the aim of reaching a comprehensive solution and not of reaching the sort of separate partial solutions that have proved to be ineffectual in achieving security, stability and peace in the region. Consequently, the Gaza-Jericho agreement, which was engineered outside the context of the peace talks, cannot be viewed as a solution to the region's crisis.

That being the case, the Arab States have stressed the fact that the Palestinian-Israeli agreement is a first step that should be completed by urgent steps on all the other tracks to ensure Israel's withdrawal from the entire occupied Syrian Golan and the Lebanese territory. This proceeded from the conviction of the Council of the Arab League that in order for peace to be permanent, it must be comprehensive, just, and based on the relevant Security Council resolutions and the norms of international legality.

The policy of separating the tracks, the splintering of peace and solutions on the various fronts, the provocative statements made daily by Israeli officials, who cling to the settlement policy, to the occupation of Al-Quds, to the rejection of withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 boundaries and to the freezing and ignoring of the other tracks in the interests of implementing the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization, all these are indicators of the absence of any desire to achieve a comprehensive and just peace.

The Israeli statements that aim at side-stepping the requirement of comprehensiveness in any viable solution are clear indications of the absence of that desire. Various pretexts are used. For example, Israeli officials say they need more time to digest the Palestine-Israeli agreement. This is a pretext that may be valid in relation to fighting a war on several fronts, but how could it be valid in relation to peace?

Against the backdrop of this Israeli policy that bespeaks a determination to shrug off any commitment to the elements that would ensure the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace, we have to ask ourselves: what kind of peace does Israel want if it refuses withdrawal, if it hangs on to the policy of settlement and if it pursues a policy that simply refuses to recognize legitimate Arab rights? What sort of peace does Israel want if it continues to work diligently to entrench and perpetuate its occupation of Al-Quds and if it continues to speak of a partial withdrawal from the Golan?

Syria is committed to the points of reference that it has accepted - points on the basis of which the Madrid Conference was convened. It will remain fully committed to the application of the principles of international legality and to the land-for-peace principle. Syria will not accept anything that runs counter to the requirements of a comprehensive and just peace. Syria has summed up those requirements as being complete withdrawal in return for comprehensive peace in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, which stipulate that it is inadmissible to acquire land by force and which call for the withdrawal of Israeli forces to the lines of 4 June 1967 and for ending Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon.

If Israel's rulers are really serious about peace they have to declare their commitment to international legality and to its resolutions in that regard, as well as to the land-for-peace principle. They must announce also that they are prepared to withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories. By so doing, they will make it possible to discuss the requirements of peace and the achievement of security and stability for all the countries of the region.

We truly and sincerely wish to see an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict and to see tension and wars in the region defused and ended. For us, peace is a strategic objective, but it must not be secured at the expense of land or rights. A stable peace in the region is impossible to achieve in the presence of occupation, and it could not continue in the presence of injustice, oppression and the usurpation of rights. Until Arab territories are returned to their rightful owners and Arab rights are restored, it will not be possible to speak of real peace in the Middle East.

Regardless of any regional or international balance of power, the right of peoples to their lands is fundamental and is not a subject for discussion. No one can hide the facts, erase the inalienable rights of peoples or simply cancel out the history of nations and peoples struggling for full freedom, independence and undiminished sovereignty.

I should like, in conclusion, to point out that the draft resolution regarding the occupied Syrian Golan, which is before the General Assembly in the context of the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East", does not contain any hostile language, but simply states the facts. Syria's main reason for presenting it is to remind the international community that the Syrian Golan is still under Israeli occupation and that Israel's annexation of it is null and void and is rejected by the international community. The draft resolution is also intended to remind Israel that it has not yet withdrawn from the Golan.

We do not want this draft resolution to affect the ongoing peace process in any way or to be interpreted as an impediment to that process.

Mr. ABDUL GHAFFAR (Bahrain) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Given its importance and its effect on international peace and security, the Middle East is one of the sensitive regions of the world. Given the situation's implications for other regions, the re-establishing and stabilizing of peace in the region are of vital importance to the whole world in view of the effect this would have on the other regions of the world. This requires the deployment by the international community of intensive efforts to achieve a peaceful, just and equitable settlement to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

No peaceful settlement in the region could be reached in a piecemeal fashion. Therefore, equal importance must be attached to all the other tracks in order to ensure a just, comprehensive settlement. In our view, it is extremely important to emphasize the following two elements with regard to any peaceful settlement; first, no settlement can be successful unless it leads to Israel's withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories, including Al-Quds, in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); and secondly, the question of Palestine is at the very core of the Middle East conflict. No settlement that fails to resolve that question could ever lead to comprehensive peace in the absence of an overall integral approach that would enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights.

A few days ago I made a statement on the item entitled "Question of Palestine" in which I noted that my country views the signing in Washington, D.C., on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements as an important step towards the settlement of the question of Palestine and as a first stage in the process leading to an equitable solution to that question of Palestine and to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Let me make it clear that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination is a fundamental principle that must be taken into consideration

in the Middle East peace negotiations which should lead to the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

Although there have been positive developments in regard to the question of Palestine such as the signing of the Declaration of Principles by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Israeli Government, yet we cannot see any real progress in the negotiations between Syria and the Israeli Government. We are convinced that any solution on the Syrian track must involve Israel's complete withdrawal from the Golan and the dismantlement of its settlements, in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. We hope the negotiations between Syria and Israel will move forward towards that goal.

Parts of the Lebanese territory are still under Israeli occupation. Furthermore, the inhabitants of southern Lebanon continue to be the targets of continuing Israeli acts of aggression with the result that many of them have been forced to flee from their homes in order to escape the ravages of the onslaughts of the Israeli military machine, which is completely oblivious to the suffering of civilians, as we saw last summer. We call upon Israel, in this respect, to implement Security Council resolution 425 (1978), which stipulates the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from the territory of Lebanon. We cannot but emphasize once again our commitment to upholding Lebanon's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized boundaries.

We attach great importance to the question of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East because of the grave threat it poses to the security and stability of the region. Israel's pursuit of its nuclear programmes outside international monitoring does not serve the cause of peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Therefore, it is essential, in the interests of confidence-building, which is one of the practical underpinnings of the ongoing peace process, that Israel should accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and submit its nuclear installations to the safeguards regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We have supported initiatives to rid the Middle East of all nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction in the interest of our present and future generations. Given their importance for the region as a whole, we hope those two initiatives will be implemented.

My delegation considers that the United Nations has an important role to play on the question of the Middle East in view of its experience over the past few years in helping resolve regional conflicts in many parts of the world. Moreover, its experience in the region and in peace-keeping and monitoring operations qualify the Organization to play a constructive and positive role in any possible peaceful settlement in the Middle East.

The international community's determination to find peaceful solutions to regional conflicts is a positive sign for the Middle East. That is why it is important to intensify efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the problems of the region now that the peace process has taken significant steps towards a peaceful settlement. It is vital that any solution be based on international law and on the principles of the Charter, and on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. At the same time, the international community should call upon Israel to implement those international resolutions in order to achieve lasting peace in the region.

Mr. HATANO (Japan): This is a time of dramatic change in the Middle East. The agreement signed in September by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) has generated momentum for peace throughout the region. Of course, much hard work remains to be done, and many pitfalls lie ahead; nevertheless, genuine progress is being made towards the achievement of peace in the Middle East.

While the Palestinian issue is at the very heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict, comprehensive peace in the region will never be achieved unless there is peace between Israel and Syria. I earnestly hope that progress is made on this track before too long.

Our attention is also drawn to Lebanon, a country that has long been troubled by political instability due to internal and external turmoil, including the wider Middle East conflict. Although the Taif Agreement brought Lebanon out of civil war, it has by no means been fully implemented, and I urge all parties concerned to work in good faith towards that end. At the same time, it is essential that the Lebanese Government establish effective control throughout its territory.

The civil war and related violence have had devastating effects on Lebanon's economy and society. The reconstruction of the nation and the development of a stable and democratic society will require the assistance of the international community as a whole. Japan, for its part, is ready to support such efforts.

Another international concern is terrorist activity in the region. Terrorism is a challenge to every nation in the world; the fight against it must therefore be a collective effort. Japan has committed itself to the elimination of all forms of terrorism and to cutting off all assistance to terrorist groups.

In this regard, I cannot but note that little progress has been made in gaining Libya's cooperation in efforts to clarify the facts surrounding the downing of flights Pan Am 103 and UTA 772, among whose victims was a Japanese national. As a consequence of Libya's non-compliance with resolutions 731 (1992) and 748 (1992), the Security Council adopted resolution 883 (1993) last month. Japan once again urges the Libyan Government to comply fully with these Security Council resolutions without further delay.

The intransigence of the Iraqi Government also poses a threat to regional stability. Particularly disturbing is Iraq's rejection of its boundary with Kuwait as demarcated by the United Nations. The supposedly spontaneous demonstrations by hundreds of Iraqi citizens along the Kuwaiti border on 16 and 20 November call into question the Government's political will and intentions. Moreover, the Government's economic blockade of the Kurds in the north and its oppression of the population in the south demonstrate a disregard for human life. The whereabouts and conditions of the 600 Kuwaitis missing since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait are another concern. The Iraqi Government has not complied with requests from the International Committee of the Red Cross for access to or information on these Kuwaiti nationals.

On the other hand, just last week Iraq did demonstrate a willingness to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission and accepted long-term monitoring of its weapons of mass destruction, as called for in Security Council resolution 715 (1991). We welcome this attitude and hope that Iraq's words will be translated into positive actions. I reiterate Japan's appeal to Iraq to comply with all the other relevant Security Council resolutions as well.

The situation in the Middle East has been a focus of concern for the General Assembly for more than four decades. We must not retreat from the hard-won progress achieved so far, but must maintain the momentum for a comprehensive peace.

Mr. OSVALD (Sweden): The Middle East is entering a new era. The historic handshake between Prime Minister Rabin of Israel and Chairman Arafat of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in Washington, D.C. a few months ago added a totally new dimension to the situation in the region. Traditional perceptions were shattered. The deep-rooted enemy images that each side had nurtured over decades of bloody conflict were radically changed.

We all know that the parties still disagree on several issues of fundamental importance but - and this is what is new and of overriding importance - Israel and the PLO have now committed themselves to jointly seeking solutions to their problems. Postures of confrontation are turning into a partnership. This will be of immeasurable benefit not only to the Israelis, the Palestinians and the Middle East as a region but also to the international community as a whole.

Sweden salutes the courage and statesmanship demonstrated by the leaders of Israel and the PLO. The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed by Israel and the PLO on 13 September 1993 is a first and very important step towards a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Sweden expresses its full support for the patient endeavours of the sponsors of the Peace Conference on the Middle East - the United States and the Russian Federation - to promote the peace process. We would also like to express our admiration for the skilful diplomatic efforts of Norway that helped produce the Israeli-Palestinian breakthrough.

A lasting peace in the Middle East must be comprehensive. Sweden therefore encourages the parties to make progress on all the tracks of the peace process. In this context, we welcome the agreement between Jordan and Israel on the Common Agenda. We strongly hope that the two countries will soon be in a position to make substantive progress in their bilateral talks. Furthermore, Sweden hopes that the bilateral negotiations between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon will soon lead to concrete results in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions.

An essential prerequisite for any settlement in the Middle East is the recognition of Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. At the same time, the legitimate rights of Israel's neighbours must be fully respected. Sweden supports the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the right to form their own State if they so desire. The practical implications of this need to be discussed in the final status negotiations between Israel and the PLO.

In line with the carefully crafted timetable in the Declaration of Principles, life in the occupied territories will soon change. Israeli forces will withdraw from positions in Gaza and Jericho. Authority will be transferred to the Palestinians in the fields of education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation and tourism. Difficulties in the negotiations between the parties must be overcome so as not to endanger the agreed timetable.

It goes without saying that the international community must do its utmost to contribute to the

realization of these concrete aspects of the peace process. Making it possible for the Palestinians fully to express their national identity, together with an improvement in their living conditions, will help to consolidate peace and security for all. It is thus clearly in our interest to promote reconciliation and improved prospects for economic and social development. This will reduce tensions and inspire hope for the future. Furthermore, in such a positive climate, the arguments of the sceptics and rejectionists on both sides will sound increasingly hollow.

During the current fiscal year, Sweden's assistance to the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza will increase to approximately $28 million. The bulk of the assistance is channelled through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the bilateral support is mainly dedicated to three sectors: health, support for human rights organizations, and the development and strengthening of Palestinian institutions. Sweden calls upon the international community, including the international financial institutions and non-governmental organizations, to be actively involved in and contribute generously to development projects in the West Bank and Gaza.

If they are to have a maximum impact, it is essential that contributions from the international donor community be coordinated in an efficient manner. For the actual implementation on the ground, we believe that the existing channels, such as UNRWA and other United Nations agencies with long experience in the region, should be used as much as possible. At the same time, the World Bank plays a useful role as a multilateral clearing-house on the macro level. In addition, the Palestinians themselves have a major role and responsibility in the creation of an appropriate institutional framework for absorbing the international assistance and directing it to priority projects. We urge the Palestinian leadership to take immediate measures in this regard.

Sweden deeply deplores the recent acts of violence in the occupied territories with the intention of jeopardizing the peace process. The vicious circle of violence and counter-violence must be broken. All parties must exercise their authority to achieve this end. Unfortunately, there are still reports of repressive measures being taken by the Israeli security forces against the Palestinian population. The human rights of the Palestinians must be respected, and we urge Israel to recognize the full applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the occupied territories.

In order to enhance a positive atmosphere for negotiations, the parties should start implementing a series of confidence-building measures. For example, Israel should continue its freeze on the construction of new settlements and stop the expansion of existing ones. Furthermore, the closure of the occupied territories needs to be lifted. The Arab States, for their part, should immediately end their boycott of Israel. Individually or jointly, the States of the region should take measures to safeguard the ecological balance, a clean environment and an equitable distribution of the water supply, all necessary conditions for peace and stability.

Sweden participates actively in all the working groups in the multilateral part of the Madrid process. In the working group on refugees, we coordinate issues relating to the welfare of children.

The importance of the work in the multilateral negotiations for the Middle East as a region can hardly be overestimated. Substantive progress on the different bilateral tracks of the peace process will undoubtedly provide an invaluable impetus to the multilateral working groups, and vice versa.

Through the joint search for solutions to common regional problems relating to such matters as water resources, protection of the environment, economic development, refugees, and disarmament and security, the States in the Middle East may at long last be able to go from confrontation to cooperation.

By addressing these concrete and practical issues, a web of regional interactions may emerge, creating new relationships of mutual interdependence. Increased trade, the exchange of people and information, the transfer of technological and scientific know-how and, last but not least, exchanges in the fields of culture and sports may become reality.

We can now glimpse the possibility that, one day, the vast human and material resources of the countries in the Middle East will be pooled in joint projects, enhancing the well-being and security of all.

In the Declaration of Principles, the Palestinian people and the Israeli people recognized their mutual political rights. They seek to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security within the framework of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace. Recent experience in different parts of the world has shown us how complex a peace process of this kind can be. Success requires strong and steadfast backing from the entire international community. Let us therefore give our full support to the peace process at this historic juncture.

Mr. AL-NI'MAH (Qatar) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: It is a pleasure for me to stand before this international Assembly to take up the situation in the

Middle East, the region to which my country belongs - a region which has long suffered from problems which have resulted from lack of respect for the principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law.

At the head of this list of problems is, undoubtedly, the Arab-Israeli conflict, which has moved into a new and historic stage following a long period of suffering and bitter conflict - a conflict which kept the Middle East in shackles and which created a hell for that region, a conflict which long threatened conflagration, a dark conflict in which one could not discern the smallest hope of understanding or compassion. But now, after all of that, we can finally make out the light at the end of the tunnel as we move towards a new and historic era where peace supplants conflict. This comes as a result of the agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization on those principles by which the Palestinians in the occupied territories may satisfy their aspirations to self-determination following a specific period of self-rule.

It is a source of the gravest concern to witness the continuing acts of violence in the Gaza Strip and in the Jericho area. We had hoped that such practices would end with the upcoming Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, set to take place in less than two weeks, according to the agreement between the two parties.

Perhaps I would not be exaggerating if I were to say that when those difficulties standing in the way of the implementation of the Israeli-Palestinian agreement are overcome, we hope that the peace process will move forward along the other tracks as well, particularly on the Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli tracks. This is something we look forward to and something we aspire to. We hope that this will take place in the near future so that a just, durable and comprehensive solution to the question of Palestine and to the Arab-Israeli dispute can be found based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) - those two resolutions which embody the land-for-peace principle as well as the mutual recognition of the sovereignty and security of the States of the region within internationally recognized borders.

Any astute observer of the Middle East will realize the importance of the Gulf, which is a vital part of the Middle East region. The two consecutive wars that our region has suffered in one decade lead us to attach a particular importance to the question of peace and stability in the Middle East. The State of Qatar believes that security and stability in the Gulf cannot be obtained without cooperative relations between the States of the region themselves, relations based on good neighbourliness; mutual trust; non-interference in internal affairs; respect of internationally recognized borders; and the settlement of disputes and disagreements between the States of the region by peaceful means - the means of dialogue, mediation and international law, as provided for by the Charter of the United Nations.

It is most important for us to reaffirm the need for this international Organization to protect the sovereignty of the State of Kuwait as well as its territorial integrity within its international borders. Those borders must be respected, as provided for by Security Council resolution 833 (1993). Furthermore, we call on the brother country of Iraq fully to respect all relevant Security Council resolutions, and particularly resolution 687 (1991) in all its provisions.

This, in turn, will help in establishing stability and security in our region while guaranteeing Iraq's territorial unity and the unity of its people as well as its territorial integrity.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the independence of our beloved Lebanon, we salute our sister country that has suffered a lengthy civil war and foreign invasion; we salute the struggle and steadfastness of its people. We look with admiration on the efforts Lebanon is making for political stability and for its security and rehabilitation. The State of Qatar, which has a sense of national duty in this regard, is helping to promote the sovereignty of Lebanon and to satisfy our brothers' appeal for assistance for rehabilitation.

We reaffirm the need for complete and unconditional implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) calling for complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Lebanese territory. We look forward to seeing a Lebanon that is once again proud, the Lebanon which was and is the home of all noble values, Lebanon living once again in prosperity, peace and security. May Lebanon once again take its place in the march of human history and civilization.

We appeal to Israel to read the history of Lebanon in a manner that would allow for conciliation and understanding, that would enable goodwill to be shown and that would make it possible to take the vitally necessary measures to help build bridges of confidence and strengthen and deepen the belief in cooperation and understanding and the belief that these highest, most noble values must be respected. None of this can be achieved unless Israel first, and most important, undertakes to implement all the provisions of Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

Any thinking person must realize that the continuing occupation of Arab territory, including the occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights, has imposed on all those living

there a hell of complications, including terrible material and psychological living conditions, conditions of oppression and turmoil. To remedy this siutation, further efforts are required towards taking the necessary measures to build bridges of confidence and show more goodwill and good intentions; this would deepen the commitment of all those in the occupied territories to the success of the peace process, to safeguarding the peace process and to achieving the continuation and further progress of that process.

The common denominator is the building of bridges of confidence. This is a responsibility that falls on more than one pair of shoulders, and the more parties carry that responsibility, the more likely it is that the peace process will bear fruit.

Consequently, the United Nations must continue and redouble its efforts in its vital role in the area of international cooperation and international legality; confidence-building and a commitment to the values of peaceful coexistence are again the cornerstones here. Given its responsibility in this area and in terms of the need to build confidence, we would stress the need for the United Nations and its various agencies to play their vitally important role of covering all the economic, political, social and developmental aspects of this march towards peace as a necessary condition for the peace process to move forward and succeed.

The political and economic stability of the Middle East is closely intertwined with another important problem: arms control. We therefore call on the international community to stand shoulder to shoulder in mobilizing further efforts to put an end to the arms race in that region. The region itself must mobilize all its capabilities and resources to build the progress and prosperity to which it aspires. Arms control and an end to the arms race must apply to all States in the region without exception.

The State of Qatar insists on the need to free the region from weapons of mass destruction, and particularly nuclear weapons. My country reaffirms the need for all States in the region, without exception, to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

The Middle East region, which has suffered so long as a hotbed of tension and a battlefield for armed, overt and covert conflicts, must now enjoy the stability its peoples need for their economies to develop and for their standards of living to rise; the dawning indications that there will be solutions to most of the problems of the region is something we truly welcome, and we hope that this desired end will be reached in the near future.

Mr. ROWE (Australia): The past few months have seen profound and historic changes in the situation in the Middle East that have at last laid the foundations for a comprehensive settlement to the dispute which for so long has bitterly divided Israel and its Arab neighbours and deprived the people of the region of peace, security and prosperity. The Declaration of Principles signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in Washington on 13 September 1993, outlining a plan for an interim Palestinian authority in Gaza and Jericho and setting a timetable for negotiations on the permanent status of the occupied territories, was a vital breakthrough in the search for a comprehensive settlement.

The countries of the region and the wider international community now have a clear responsibility to harness the momentum created by these encouraging developments and secure a just and lasting peace. Like other responsible countries, Australia has a deep interest in the region and is concerned at the implications for global security of conflict in the region.

Australia's policy towards the Middle East is based on two main premises: a total commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries and recognition of the Palestinian people's right of self-determination, including their right, if they so choose, to independence and the possibility of an independent State.

Australia has for many years supported a comprehensive solution to the Middle East dispute based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call for Israel's withdrawal from territories occupied during the 1967 war and respect for and acknowledgment of the sovereignty of all States in the region and their right to live in peace within secure boundaries. We therefore warmly welcome the signing of the Declaration of Principles which, we believe, has the potential to become the basis of such a comprehensive and lasting solution. The Israel-PLO agreement is, however, only the first step in what will be a long and difficult journey to peace.

The challenge the international community now faces is twofold: to ensure that the agreement allowing Palestinian autonomy in Gaza and Jericho does not founder for lack of economic and political support and to nurture progress in the other bilateral tracks of negotiation to match that achieved between Israel and the PLO. In recognition of the importance of the first of these challenges, Australia has committed $A 15 million over three years to support the implementation of the Gaza-Jericho accord. These funds will be spent on development activities crucial to the success of the new

Palestinian administration, such as income generation, training, health, sanitation and water resources. We believe that, if support for the peace agreement is to be maintained among the Palestinian people, it must bring immediate and significant benefits to their lives. Accordingly, we urge the international community to continue to provide economic support and practical assistance to the new Palestinian administration.

Australia also calls on Israel and the PLO to cooperate in maintaining the spirit of the Declaration of Principles and in implementing its clauses. It is a matter of some concern to us that the construction of settlements in and around East Jerusalem continues. Such action risks both undermining the basis on which the permanent-status negotiations are planned and eroding the confidence of the Palestinian people in the Israel-PLO agreement. The potential for violence from rejectionist elements on both sides to upset the accord is very real. We urge both Israel and the PLO to pursue a vigilant but balanced approach to controlling those who resort to violence.

The second challenge is no less important. The optimism accompanying the Declaration of Principles must not be allowed to draw attention away from the need for Israel, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon to continue to make progress towards their own peace agreements. Australia was pleased to note the agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda for their negotiations, and we encourage both parties to strive for an early conclusion of a formal peace.

Australia calls on Israel, Syria and Lebanon to redouble their efforts to narrow their differences and find a common basis for peace. It is clear that the principle which will serve as the foundation for future peace agreements between Israel and Syria and between Israel and Lebanon is already accepted by all sides: territorial concessions by Israel in return for guarantees of security for Israel, including through the establishment of a full peace. We urge all parties to pursue settlements on this basis.

Australia continues to be encouraged by the progress made in Lebanon towards national reconciliation. We continue to oppose any activity by outside forces that compromises Lebanon's sovereignty. We unequivocally maintain our support for the early implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and we hope that the situation in Lebanon will soon permit the withdrawal of all foreign forces from that country.

Australia believes that, given the recent positive developments, it is in the best interests of further progress in the negotiations that all parties adopt positive and forward-looking policies that serve to build confidence and nurture an atmosphere of cooperation. Now is not the time to maintain the remnants of outdated policies of the past that can only obstruct cooperation and hinder peace.

We therefore consider that the Arab economic boycott of Israel, a symbol of Arab hostility to israel, has no place as a negotiating point in the peace process. We believe that the boycott unnecessarily constrains the economic development of the region and, in particular, that it may restrict the development of the new Palestinian administration. Australia calls on the members of the Arab League to dismantle the boycott as a practical and concrete step towards peace and towards consolidating the agreements already achieved.

There can be no doubt that the Israel-PLO accord has given great impetus to the multilateral arm of the peace process. The recent meetings of the five multilateral working groups have demonstrated the potential for practical benefits flowing from a positive, cooperative approach to such important regional issues as security, economic development, water resources, the environment and refugees.

Australia is pleased to be participating in the multilateral track of the peace process. We are particularly committed to involvement in the working groups on arms control and regional security and on water resources. These are both areas where Australia has demonstrated experience and expertise and where we judge we will be able to make a significant and needed contribution to the future stability and prosperity of the region.

Australia hopes that in the light of the growing importance and relevance of the multilateral negotiations, Lebanon and Syria will end their opposition to participation in this phase of the process and share in the benefits of regional cooperation. We believe that Lebanon in particular, with the daunting challenge of national reconstruction ahead of it, has much to gain from participation in the multilateral negotiations.

Australia will continue to encourage all States of the region to work constructively towards the objective of achieving in the Middle East a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction. The achievement of that objective would provide an important basis for the enhancement of regional security. We urge all Middle East States which have not yet done so to adhere to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and we call on all parties to that Treaty to abide strictly by their obligations thereunder.

Australia continues to support fully the action taken by the Security Council on Iraq, including the continuing task of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and investigating its weapons programmes. In that regard, Australia welcomes Iraq's decision to accept unconditionally Security Council resolution 715 (1991), which sets the framework for the long-term monitoring of Iraq's programme of weapons of mass destruction. Australia calls on Iraq to implement fully and unconditionally its other obligations as set by the Security Council and to do so without delay.

We are particularly concerned about the situation of civilian groups in Iraq and also call upon the Iraqi Government to ensure, in line with Security Council resolution 688 (1991), that all of its citizens enjoy equal human and political rights.

Responsibility for the welfare of the Iraqi people rests ultimately with the Iraqi Government. Australia again urges the Government of Iraq to cooperate with the Security Council in implementing those resolutions which would allow it to resume oil exports so that the hardships that are evident among the civilian population can be addressed.

Australia also supports the Security Council's action on Libya, most recently the adoption of additional sanctions under resolution 883 (1993). We again urge Libya to comply fully with the Security council's requirements as set out in resolutions 731 (1992), 748 (1992) and 883 (1993).

In conclusion, we find ourselves at a crucial stage in what we hope will be a journey to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East. The signing of the Declaration of Principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization has injected a new sense of purpose and direction into that journey, provided a new momentum, and allowed us to glimpse the potential benefits of peaceful endeavour and cooperation. We must not let this momentum stall.

Now is the time to leave behind the accusatory rhetoric and pejorative resolutions of the past, and to break free from familiar inflexible and unworkable political stances. But in doing so we must not allow euphoria at real progress to divert our attention from the many serious problems that remain. We must seek to consolidate what we have already achieved. We urge the parties to the negotiations to capitalize on the positive atmosphere, and we urge the international community to maintain and increase its practical support, to counsel flexibility and restraint, to nurture and to nudge. Above all, we urge all parties to the peace process to accept that it is now time to look forward, not back.

We must all acknowledge, in spirit and in actions, that the benefits of a comprehensive settlement will be far-reaching: not only for peace, stability and ultimately prosperity for the region, but also as a significant contribution to global security.

Mr. REMIREZ DE ESTENOZ (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: We are pleased to participate in this debate on the items related to Palestine and the Middle East under the new conditions created by the signing on 13 September last by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements for Palestine. We believe that the signing of this agreement constitutes an important step in the process which must inexorably lead to the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and to a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It therefore constitutes progress towards the attainment of the objective of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The simultaneous mutual recognition by the two parties has also contributed to redressing some of the main failings of the Peace Conference that began in Madrid. Now, recognition of Palestine's political and national identity goes hand in hand with recognition of the right of the Palestine Liberation Organization to negotiate in that Conference, directly and on an equal footing, on behalf of its people.

In spite of the joy with which the international community initially welcomed the signing of the Washington agreements, we must recognize that the road ahead is long and complex and undoubtedly fraught with obstacles. We hope that the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements in Palestine will begin auspiciously - that is, with strict compliance with its initial provisions, above all the withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip and Jericho, beginning on 13 December 1993 and concluding as scheduled.

We believe that strict compliance with the agreements reached thus far and negotiations in good faith on the many aspects that remain to be concluded will contribute to creating at last the confidence necessary for the full implementation of the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which lay the foundations for the full exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and to its own State, and which

guarantee secure borders for all the States of the region, including Israel.

It is vital in this context that the negotiations that will now be held on the return of Palestinian refugees to their homes, on settlements in the occupied Arab territories, on the delimitation of the future borders of the two States, and on Jerusalem bear fruit also, so that the process that has been initiated will not be thwarted.

It is also essential that an end be put to Israel's policy of repression of the Palestinian people. We are concerned by recent reports of new outbreaks of violence in the occupied territories that have taken more Palestinian lives. The policies and practices of Israel, of its security forces and of the inhabitants of the illegal settlements in the occupied territories, which violate the human rights of the Palestinian people and contravene the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, must come to an end. Israel must recognize without delay the applicability of that Convention to all the occupied territories, as the Security Council and the General Assembly have repeatedly demanded.

The decades of occupation have produced a constant deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people and an erosion of their economic and social situation. It is also fundamental, if the process that is now beginning is to be concluded in a satisfactory way, and for the sake of the peace and stability of that important region of the world, to restore to the Palestinian people its self-sufficiency, so that it can proceed to rebuild the occupied territories and to progress autonomously on the path of development.

For this purpose, a concerted effort by the international community is needed, both through bilateral channels and through our Organization's mechanisms of cooperation. In this respect, we welcome the results of the International Donors' Conference to Support Middle East Peace, held on 1 October 1993, and we urge all those in a position to do so to contribute generously to the reconstruction of Palestine.

The activities undertaken by the various agencies of the United Nations over the past 40 years to help restore the rights of the Palestinian people and alleviate the suffering caused by occupation are commendable, but our Organization's role with respect to Palestine has not ended. The organs in charge of this question must coordinate their work so as to continue to contribute to eliminating the condemnable practices that still persist and their consequences; at the same time, they must participate in the various stages of the peace process that has been initiated and thus continue to exercise the rightful responsibility of the United Nations with respect to Palestine until the objective of peace in the Middle East is achieved.

The General Assembly and the Security Council should carry out the appropriate monitoring of the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, in spite of the fact that this agreement was negotiated outside the framework of the United Nations, and should also closely follow any agreements subsequently reached. An important role in this respect must be played by the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has the ability and the experience to fulfil this qualitatively new task.

At the same time, we believe the time has come to increase the number of members of that Committee. The peace process requires the efforts of the entire international community, and it may now be possible for countries that, for political reasons, did not participate in the Committee in the past to do so now.

Cuba, which has been a staunch supporter of the legitimate cause of Palestine, has also systematically advocated, and continues to advocate, the withdrawal of Israel from the other occupied Arab territories. Just as we welcome the conclusion of agreements between Jordan and Israel, we support the legitimate demands of Syria that the Golan Heights be returned to it, and we call for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from occupied Lebanese territory, in fulfilment of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). We cannot feel wholly satisfied by the achievements made until that objective has been fully met; it will not be possible to say with complete certainty that progress is being made towards peace in the Middle East until the States of the region have recovered the occupied territories they claim, the return of which is an act of justice in accordance with the principles of the Charter and of international law.

We hope that this long-suffering region of the world, which has witnessed wars, desolation and death, will now see before it a new path of peace, without hegemony and with security and stability for all the peoples that live there, free of the use of force or the threat of its use. We hope that the peoples of the region will put an end to the conflict that has afflicted it for decades and that, on the basis of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, they will be able to chart a course in the direction of progress, development and well-being.

Mr. MAKKAWI (Lebanon): As this is the first time I have addressed you, Sir, in your capacity as President of

the General Assembly, I would like to congratulate you on your assumption of this very important post. I am confident that under your wise and able leadership the Assembly will fine-tune its focus on the achievement of peace in the Middle East.

I would like also to express my delegation's appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Stoyan Ganev, for presiding so ably over the affairs of the Assembly during its forty-seventh session.

Allow me also to thank the Secretary-General for his reports (A/48/522 and A/48/607) on the situation in the Middle East and for the just views he expresses therein. Lebanon is grateful to the Secretary-General for his consistent support and tireless efforts to promote peace in the region.

More than two years have passed since the Peace Conference on the Middle East was convened in Madrid. That historic initiative was based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the clear constructs of the "land for peace" formula. It was also based on the need for full implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), on the basis of which Lebanon agreed to participate in the negotiations. As a result of Israel's failure to respect all United Nations resolutions pertaining to the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory, Lebanon committed itself to this process wholeheartedly, and we now look forward to the next round of bilateral negotiations in Washington, with the understanding that our endeavours will eventually lead to Israel's full respect for Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements recently signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Government of Israel should be viewed as a first step down the long road towards the achievement of peace in the region. While the world is inspired by the possibility of peace on the Middle East horizon, we know that the people of southern Lebanon, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights experience little of this euphoria because they are still subjected on a daily basis to occupation, oppression, domination and the violation of their human rights. Furthermore, they will continue to suffer until Israel honours its obligations arising from scores of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, the Charter of the United Nations and other instruments of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

It is our understanding that the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements will lead to the transfer from Israel to the Palestinians of authority over East Jerusalem and all of the cities, towns and villages of the West Bank and Gaza. This is the bottom line if we wish to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East - a peace which cannot be attained unless the people of Palestine are granted their legitimate national rights.

Equally, we emphasize that the signing of the agreement in Washington will not achieve genuine peace unless there is substantive progress on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks of the Arab-Israeli negotiations, leading to full Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights. We stress the need for the United Nations to play a more active role in the current peace process, the success of which is dependent upon the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

I turn now to the internal conditions of Lebanon. I am pleased to report that my Government is making great progress in restoring peace and stability to the nation. The Lebanese Army and internal security forces are in full control north of the Israeli-occupied area, and our citizens enjoy peaceful living and travel throughout the free country. In cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Lebanese Army is continuing to deploy additional units in order gradually to regain control over the UNIFIL area of operation. At the same time, Israel continues to thwart all attempts made by Lebanon to deploy its army up to its internationally recognized borders.

Israel's policy against Lebanon continues in spite of the fact that the Government and people of Lebanon have embarked upon three-year and 10-year reconstruction and development plans called "Horizon 2000", which are aimed at rebuilding the infrastructure of Beirut and the nation while competitively launching Lebanon into the twenty-first century. In the process of restoring the country to normality, we are optimistic about re-establishing our natural role as the Arab world's bastion of democracy, liberalism and free trade. I take this opportunity to thank the countries which have contributed to the success of our endeavours to this end through their aid and investments.

It is unfortunate that in the face of these optimistic developments Lebanon remains crippled by a painful thorn in its side, the Israeli occupation of parts of southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa. The international community has permitted this 15-year ordeal to continue in spite of Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978), which created UNIFIL - in the words of paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) -

"for the purpose of confirming the withdrawal of Israeli forces, restoring international peace and security and assisting the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area".

Since the convening of the International Peace Conference on the Middle East in Madrid 25 months ago, Israel's relationship with Lebanon has been conducted on two levels. As we sat face to face at the table in Madrid, shells came raining down on Lebanon. At the table in Washington we are presented with vague promises for future withdrawal, while on the ground we are subjected to bombardment for the slightest provocation. It is ironic that the so-called acts of provocation are, in fact, acts of Lebanese resistance on Lebanese soil and sanctioned under the provisions of Article 51 of the United Nations Charter.

Such was the case in late July and early August of this year, when the Israeli military killed 140 civilians, levelled scores of villages and caused the exodus of half a million people in response to Prime Minister Rabin's announcement that a major objective of his so-called Operation Accountability was the displacement of the civilian population and the flooding of Beirut with refugees. All of this aggression was in retaliation for the killing of 7 Israeli soldiers on Lebanese national soil.

If Israel continues to use the security of its northern border as a pretext for perpetuating the occupation of southern Lebanon, we would rationally argue that that policy only contributes to the disruption of security. Indeed, the test of time has proved that the only way to ensure regional security is by putting an end to occupation and the human-rights abuses that naturally accompany that practice. Simply put, the source of conflict between Israel and Lebanon is the Israeli occupation, which must end if there is to be peace in the region.

Having said that, I am sad to report that, pursuant to two years of negotiations on the Lebanese-Israeli track, Israel has not taken a single confidence-building measure relevant to my country, although it is well aware of one particular gesture that would mean so much to my people.

Every day we hope and pray for the release of hundreds of our citizens from Israeli prisons, including the Al-Khiyam Detention Centre in southern Lebanon, which is notorious for the infliction of physical and psychological torture on prisoners. Despite repeated appeals by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and Amnesty International, in addition to demands made by the Lebanese Government and human-rights societies around the world, Israel refuses to release them. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities have for more than 8 years denied visits to those prisoners by the International Committee of the Red Cross or family members.

Today, therefore, I avail myself once more of this rostrum to reiterate my Government's appeal that these people be released, for their only crime is patriotism. Israel is in duty bound to grant this request in compliance with the relevant international treaties and conventions.

Today, as the Organization conducts its annual debate on the situation in the Middle East it is painfully aware that it has yet to rise to the aspirations of its founding fathers, who saw in the United Nations the potential to guarantee international law, peace and stability. By the same token, it is aware of the longevity and tenacity of this problem, which is the number-one obstacle to world peace. It is also aware that peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours has yet to be achieved despite limited progress on the Palestinian-Israeli track.

Bearing that in mind, we are duly alarmed by Israel's opposition to internationally recognized principles central to the achievement of a comprehensive peace settlement, over which discussion has been postponed to the final phase of negotiations on the Palestinian-Israeli track. These include Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territory, including Jerusalem, the dismantling of all settlements in these lands and the repatriation of Palestinian refugees to their native soil.

Here, I must mention that the matter of the repatriation of refugees is of crucial importance to Lebanon, which categorically rejects any attempt to settle permanently in Lebanon the 400,000 Palestinians who live on our national soil. This is because Lebanon is a very small State with a delicate population composition and scant economic resources. Furthermore, we are committed to the realization of the legitimate national aspirations of the Palestinian people and honour the Assembly's resolution 194 (III) of 1948, which affirms the right of the Palestinians to return to their homeland.

Allow me to conclude by saying that only one State in the region is in a position to alleviate the situation in the Middle East by implementing Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). However, should Israel refuse to abide by these and other resolutions to the full letter of the law, then it is incumbent upon the United Nations to ensure their implementation. Since the United Nations has issued more than 80 resolutions and statements defending Lebanon against Israel, we encourage a broad role for the Organization in the Middle East peace process, including active participation in bilateral and multilateral negotiations.

Finally, let me add that Lebanon is a firm believer in peace and will be the first to benefit from the achievement of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. Peace and prosperity are what we deeply desire because we have suffered for so long and wish to rebuild our nation. We appeal to the international community to bring an end to this occupation so that we may devote all of our efforts and energies to the reconstruction process.

Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal) *(interpretation from French)*: The signing on 13 September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, including its annexes and Agreed Minutes, preceded by the mutual recognition between the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the State of Israel, represents a historic turning-point in the troubled relations among the peoples of the Middle East.

The Senegalese Head of State, speaking as Chairman of the sixth Summit Meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, hailed the advance made by the Palestinian and Israeli leaders as well as the outstanding work accomplished by all who had helped to achieve that important step towards the settlement of the Palestinian question and, hence, the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The debate we held at the beginning of this week when the Assembly considered agenda item 35, "Question of Palestine," gave a clear notion of the immense hope the international community places in the prospects for peace that have emerged in the region.

Thus, we believe that in this time of delicate and complex transition it is important not only to manifest and translate into concrete actions our unwavering support for the leaders of the region, who have committed themselves to the arduous path of peace, but also to reaffirm the special responsibility and role that remain incumbent upon the United Nations in the quest for a comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the conflict based on the principles set forth in the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

At this stage, which is crucial for the future of the region, the consolidation and continuation of the process that has begun also depends on several factors, all of them just as decisive as scrupulous respect, by the parties concerned, for the provisions of the Declaration of Principles and the realization of tangible progress in the other bilateral negotiations.

We welcome the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda for their negotiations and we hope that such a dialogue will soon begin with Lebanon and Jordan, with a view to the total withdrawal by Israel from the territories illegally occupied in southern Lebanon and in the Golan Heights, including the Holy City of Jerusalem.

Among the factors that will, to a large extent, determine the progress towards peace, we consider it essential to emphasize also the need for respect by Israel of the obligations incumbent on it, as the occupying Power, to protect the civilian population of the occupied Arab territories.

Indeed, at a time when negotiations that are crucial for the future of the region are under way it is urgent to lower tensions and to abandon the policy of wanton repression, which only helps to whip up extremism.

From this point of view it is just as urgent that all of the countries concerned in the region should commit themselves resolutely to turning over a new page and to putting an end to hesitation, which only helps to strengthen the position of those who oppose the peace process.

Today the political achievements must soon be reflected in the field by an improvement in the living conditions of the populations of the region, especially the poorest among them living in the occupied Arab territories.

We welcome the results achieved in this regard by the International Donors Conference to Support Middle East Peace held in Washington on 1 October 1993, and initiatives taken by the Secretary-General to strengthen and broaden the effective work carried out by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

Finally, we appeal to all countries and organizations which have committed themselves to supporting the Programme for reconstruction and development in Palestine to do so generously and in so doing to strengthen the chances for the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace for the benefit of all peoples in the region.

Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil): It is with a clear sense of awareness of the important moment we are going through that my delegation is taking the opportunity to address the agenda item on "The situation in the Middle East". Brazil welcomed the epoch-making signing of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization and hopes that it will pave the way to further significant political changes in the Middle East.

After many decades of military conflict and a political standstill in the region, we now have good grounds for hoping that one of the most complex questions faced by the international community may finally be giving way to

a comprehensive, just and lasting peace. Since 1947, when it adopted resolution 181 (II) on the partition of Palestine, the United Nations has been endeavouring to bring about peace in that troubled region. Although, in the past, progress was slow in coming, we are heartened by the fact that our efforts were not in vain. The relevant deliberations and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council continue to provide an important framework for the parties.

More recently, the United Nations has been called to join, as a full participant, in the negotiation process initiated by the Madrid Conference. In the multilateral segment of these talks, the United Nations is assisting the parties to develop joint projects in vital areas such as those relating to refugees, water and economic cooperation.

The United Nations is well equipped to provide international cooperation to the occupied territories. Through the commendable work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), which was created in 1949 by resolution 302 (IV), and whose mandate has been continuously renewed since then, we have at our disposal a good inventory of the needs of the region. Its Peace Implementation Programme and the report of the Secretary-General's task force on "Supporting the transition: an immediate response of the United Nations to the Interim Period in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" provide relevant guidelines for the international community's initiatives in the region.

The promotion of economic development and the enhancement of the quality of life in the occupied territories are essential steps in establishing an environment conducive to smooth implementation of the peace process. In particular, we welcome the results of the pledging Conference recently held in Washington at which substantial resources were raised to further international cooperation. The Declaration of Principles provides for a five-year period of transition beginning with the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. This complex and critical process should be nurtured and preserved carefully. The fostering of economic ties between the Palestinian and Israeli communities will strengthen confidence between the parties and may lead to the creation of a commonwealth of interests that would overcome the past cycle of violence and hatred.

In this respect, we note with concern the renewal of acts of violence in the region, a regrettable development at variance with the direction of the process inaugurated by the September accord. Such deplorable acts should be promptly controlled by the authorities concerned. We call on the parties to exercise the utmost restraint and unreservedly to support efforts with a view to a peaceful settlement of the conflict that has long plagued the region.

Progress must be achieved in the other tracks of the negotiations as well. It is critically important that positive developments in one segment be reflected by similar achievements in the settlement of other disputes in the area. It is hoped that progress in the Jordanian-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli negotiations will further contribute to the peace settlement in the region.

Brazil is following attentively the unfolding of events in the region. My Government has just decided to grant diplomatic status to a special Palestinian delegation that is shortly to operate in Brazil, representing the Palestine Liberation Organization, as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Furthermore, we are prepared to participate actively in international cooperation efforts through the identification of technical, scientific, technological and services cooperation projects to be supported by the United Nations.

Finally, my delegation is pleased at indications that important progress has been achieved in the text of some of the draft resolutions on this issue that are before the General Assembly at its current session. We have noted with satisfaction that much of the language has been updated, the number of draft resolutions has been reduced, and the text of a positive resolution is being worked out by the parties concerned. We hope that these trends indicate that the past period of confrontation is indeed coming to a close and that a new climate of understanding and cooperation is dawning.

Mr. HUSLID (Norway): It gives me great pleasure and satisfaction to speak in the General Assembly today. The reason for this is, of course, that the debate this year is taking place in conditions quite different from those of previous years. For years debates on the situation in the Middle East were acrimonious, divisive and frustrating, and the situation itself seemed to have reached deadlock, with all the dangers that that implies.

This has now changed. The signing ceremony on the lawn of the White House in Washington on 13 September was a formal expression of a historic breakthrough, which has transformed the situation from one of frustration and fear into one of expectation and hope.

There are several actors whose contributions deserve mention here, but today I should like to pay special tribute to the parties involved - Israel and the PLO, in the persons of Prime Minister Rabin and Foreign Minister Peres and Chairman Arafat. It is true that Norway facilitated the

talks that led up to the breakthrough, but it was the parties, and the parties alone, who negotiated the accord and achieved the results. They all showed outstanding courage and vision, which history will not forget. More immediately, their courageous action will benefit thousands of men, women and children in the region, who may now hope for a life in peace and security.

However, this event does not only represent expectations and hope; it also entails obligations and responsibilities. We must now seize the opportunity to ensure that the first breakthrough is sustained and implemented on a broad front. The danger of setbacks is always present - a danger that has been well demonstrated even during the last few days. It is of paramount importance that the parties do their utmost to carry out faithfully the agreements they have entered into, in spite of opposition and attempts by extremist groups to derail the process. And the world community must support the parties in every way possible.

In this connection, it must be emphasized that, in order to succeed, the peace process must be accompanied and strengthened by economic development. This will involve external assistance from the world community so that the Palestinian people can be helped along their new road to self-government.

A start in the right direction was made by the Donors' Conference in Washington on 1 October, a Conference that resulted in pledges of around $2 billion. The Washington Conference was followed up by the meeting in Paris on 5 November of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, which laid down the guidelines for future assistance and cooperation. There can be no doubt that economic assistance and cooperation are vital to the success of the peace process. Norway has pledged about $150 million for a five-year period as our contribution to the furthering of this process.

It is important that the follow-up process be adequately supported, strengthened and coordinated by the international community. In this connection, we were pleased to note the assurance given by the Secretary-General in his report to the Assembly that

> "The United Nations stands ready to lend its full support to the peace process"

and that the efforts already started

> "will intensify in the months ahead." *(A/48/607, para. 7)*

It is, of course, important that duplication of work be avoided and that the activities of the different agencies, organizations and funds complement each other in an efficient way. Here I have in mind the United Nations - the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East - in addition to the World Bank. These organizations have already played an important role, and they should continue to do so in the future. We also welcome the United Nations high-level task force that has been established to provide coordination and direction.

As Chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee, Norway is pleased that the United Nations has now joined that Committee as a fully associated member. In addition, the United Nations will join the secretariat of the Committee on a secondment basis.

The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is but an initial, though highly important, step towards achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. We must now also address the need to profit without delay from the momentum we have gained, in order to achieve progress in other areas of the Arab-Israeli negotiations. One tangible result has already been achieved, in the form of the agreement between Jordan and Israel on a common agenda, which was signed in Washington on 14 September. We welcome this step, which we hope will be followed by others and will inspire further steps by Israel and Lebanon and by Israel and Syria.

Clearly, further progress and solutions depend on the parties themselves. Neither third countries nor the United Nations nor any other organization can make peace on behalf of others; they can only facilitate the process.

It is important, furthermore, that in our work here at the United Nations we try to reflect the new developments in the Middle East. Thus, in our debates and resolutions, we should direct our efforts towards exploiting future possibilities. On the Norwegian side, we have tried to contribute by helping to prepare, in cooperation with other countries, a new draft resolution with this aim in view. This draft resolution, entitled "Middle East peace process", is before the Assembly in document A/48/L.32. Its purpose is not only to welcome the peace process but also to register what we hope will be the unanimous support of the United Nations membership for further efforts towards a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

This draft resolution will not make all other resolutions redundant or irrelevant. We are fully aware that many important issues remain to be solved. However, we consider it vitally important that at this critical stage the world community express its full support through this

forum. Therefore, we hope that the draft resolution will be adopted unanimously.

The time has come when all the peoples of the Middle East may at long last hope to live their lives in peace and security. Peace and security are also prerequisites for economic development and prosperity - a prosperity that a large portion of the population of the region has so far been unable to enjoy, in spite of the abundance of natural resources. The challenges are formidable, and the stakes are high. But so also will be the rewards if the peace process can be successfully completed.

My Government stands ready to continue to play an active part in assisting this process.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Just a few days ago, the General Assembly discussed the question of Palestine, the most important and yet most controversial issue in the Middle East region. It needs to be addressed, discussed and attended to because the question of Palestine is not merely a transient conflict between two parties; rather, it is a question whose implications have captured the attention of the whole region for a very long time, mainly because of attitudes and policies of the occupying Power. The Zionist regime does not confine itself to occupying the holy land of Palestine and the violation of the basic human rights of the Palestinians. The Golan Heights and southern Lebanon continue to be under Israeli occupation.

Still worse, the Muslim people of southern Lebanon are the target of heavy bombardment and shelling on a continuous basis. It is astonishing how those who are fighting to liberate their land from occupation are called on to desist from doing so, while at the same time the aggressor is supported wholeheartedly by certain Western countries. What the people of southern Lebanon are doing is resisting aggression and occupation, which indeed deserves to be supported by the entire international community.

The Zionist regime has realized the benefit it can reap by trying to project international blame somewhere else. To that end, Israel has extensively capitalized on the situation by introducing an artificial threat to our region in order to divert the attention of the international community in general and the countries of the region in particular from the question of Palestine. Israel finds it useful to portray this artificial threat as a substitute for the now defunct communist scarecrow in order to receive special treatment from its patrons. It is a well-established fact that Israel is orchestrating a misinformation and propaganda campaign against others and is trying to foster discord, distrust and division among States in the region.

Unfortunately, the sources of instability and tension in the region have not been taken into account in dealing with the situation in the Middle East. Within the general framework of these sources of instability are persistent problems such as aggression and occupation on the one hand, and the perception of threat as a concept of national security - which gets us into questions of arms control and disarmament - on the other. In our view, peace, stability and mutual confidence can return to the Middle East and the holy land of Palestine through the full restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the withdrawal of occupying forces from other Arab lands, as well as serious treatment of the root causes of instability in the region.

The situation in the Middle East region is very volatile. The region has been the arena of many destructive conflicts over the last 40 years. Had the root causes of the problems in the region been dealt with appropriately, so many opportunities would not have been lost in the Middle East. The failure of the Security Council to address in earnest the crises in the Middle East and the Palestinian question is a sorrowful reflection of the prevailing preference for political interests over peace, security, international law and equity.

Noting the situation in the Middle East and the efforts that are being made by Israel to advance its offensive capabilities, the Islamic Republic of Iran is firmly committed to the establishment of the Middle East as a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. In the light of the constant support of the United Nations for the establishment of such a nuclear-free zone - which was initiated by Iran in 1974 - it is necessary to take constructive and practical measures towards its establishment so that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) can expand its verification system to cover all nuclear facilities in the Middle East. In the same line, as the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran stated in his remarks during the general debate earlier in this session,

> "what is really necessary, globally and particularly in the Middle East, is serious and genuine international cooperation for the comprehensive, non-selective, non-discriminatory, balanced and effective reduction of conventional arms. This may be realized, *inter alia*, through the reduction of military budgets, of weapons procurement and of the presence of foreign forces in different regions". *(Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-eighth Session, Plenary Meetings, 14th meeting, p. 24)*

In our view, until the root causes of the current critical situation in the area have been effectively dealt

with and until the IAEA is able to bring all nuclear facilities in the Middle East under its verification system, every State in the region will perceive its national security to be at great risk.

Let me say a few words regarding our immediate neighbourhood, the Persian Gulf region. We have already proposed the establishment of regional security and cooperation arrangements in the Persian Gulf; the outline of those arrangements was presented by my Foreign Minister to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly. In our view, cooperation on the basis of respect for the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of international borders, non-resort to force in the settlement of disputes and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States could ensure security and stability in the Persian Gulf so that the countries in the area could pursue, in peace and tranquility, their national policies for development and prosperity.

Yesterday evening, the representative of Belgium made some unwarranted and irrelevant comments against my country. It is not my intention even to touch upon all the issues referred to by the representative of Belgium, let alone respond to them, since they either are irrelevant to the subject at hand or have already been dealt with in my statement. However, I wish to refer to one subject - namely, the case of the author of the infamous *Satanic Verses* - which needs some clarification.

Representatives are aware that what Salman Rushdie did was an insult to Islam and to more than 1 billion Muslims around the world. I wonder how those who shed crocodile tears for the so-called violation of freedom of expression can justify their support for this travesty of all norms and rules of ethics and decency and this flagrant abuse of the principle of freedom of expression. Blasphemy against any revealed religion cannot be justified, either morally or legally, on the basis of the right to freedom of thought, opinion or expression. It is indeed a most despicable act, which deserves universal condemnation. It should be clear by now that any attempt on the part of certain countries to portray the Salman Rushdie issue as a problem related solely to the Islamic Republic of Iran is an act of distortion.

Representatives are aware that it is not only Iran that has reacted to the blasphemy by Salman Rushdie: all Islamic countries have condemned this apostasy and deliberate attempt to malign Islam and venerated Islamic personalities. In this regard, the relevant paragraph in the resolution adopted by the Eighteenth Conference of Islamic Foreign Ministers reads as follows:

"The Islamic countries strongly condemn the blasphemous book *The Satanic Verses*, whose author they regard as an apostate."

Mr. SNOUSSI (Morocco) *(interpretation from French):* The General Assembly is today considering the agenda item entitled "The situation in the Middle East" in a new international environment that offers very encouraging prospects for a settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict. My country is pleased that the wall of mistrust between the protagonists on the Middle East scene is finally beginning to crumble.

The Middle East conflict, at the heart of which is the question of Palestine, has been moving towards a negotiated settlement ever since the Madrid Conference began. Thus, the Conference, which was convened to find a solution based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), has recently borne fruit with the mutual recognition by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel, the signing between those two parties, on 13 September 1993 in Washington, D.C., of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, and the Agreement between Israel and Jordan on the Common Agenda, on 14 September 1993.

My country, which welcomes these very positive developments, pays a well-deserved tribute to those responsible, who we hope will make up for lost time. It is crucial that the process, which has taken an irreversible tack, satisfy legitimate aspirations and bring about the calm atmosphere necessary for us to address ourselves together to the strengthening of peace and the development of the region.

The Declaration of Principles between the PLO and Israel, which is a decisive first step in the dynamics of peace, has given rise, as we all know, to legitimate hope among the peoples of the Middle East and the international community in general. It is the prerequisite for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine based on international legality and respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. We hope therefore that the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the modalities of self-government will be rapidly crowned with concrete and satisfactory results and thus avoid any worsening of the situation in the territories. The deterioration of the situation in the occupied territories, which we deplore, should motivate the parties concerned to act responsibly and intensify their actions aimed at giving concrete form on the ground to commitments undertaken, thereby overcoming skepticism and frustration.

Since a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the question of Palestine will inevitably have a beneficial impact on the peace process in the region, we cannot but welcome the holding of the Donors Conference on 1 October in Washington, D.C. to support the process under way and open new horizons for Palestine and the other countries of the region, with peace finally restored.

Furthermore, we earnestly hope for a positive outcome of the Lebanese-Israeli negotiations on the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978) and for Syrian-Israeli negotiations on the restoration of the Golan Heights to Syrian sovereignty. We hope also that the good will and foresight of the parties will help promote a constructive and useful dialogue.

The purpose of the multilateral negotiations, which are the corollary to the bilateral negotiations and which Morocco is participating in and has consistently supported for several years, is to strengthen confidence in the region in the establishment of a positive and genuine peace among the parties, which should be bound by relations of mutually advantageous cooperation. The achievement of positive results in this respect will no doubt depend on the easing of the political climate.

The United Nations has made a significant contribution to the establishment of peace in the region. In so far as it remains the embodiment of international legality, which will govern a final solution to the Middle East conflict, our Organization should continue to shoulder its responsibilities fully until the Palestinian people regains its legitimate rights and neighbouring countries can henceforth live in peace. The essential principles laid down in the Organization's many resolutions on this matter should continue to guide our quest for a final solution. Those principles are, in particular, respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people; Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories, including Al-Quds, whose status should be preserved; the return of all deportees; and freedom for all the detained persons.

The United Nations has an indispensable role to play at every stage of the peace process. This active role of the Organization, in bilateral and multilateral negotiations alike, should extend to the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian spheres.

The United Nations should also endeavour to mobilize, and heighten the awareness of, the international community with a view to establishing the future Palestinian national authority and infrastructures. In this connection, we welcome the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level task force to ensure an integrated approach to the problems of the economic and social development of the occupied territories, as well as the naming of a resident coordinator for the region as part of the implementation of the Washington Declaration of Principles.

My country will spare no effort to continue to contribute to the work of peace in the Middle East on the basis of dialogue and respect for everyone's rights, legitimate interests and identity. This means that we support a true peace which would outlaw the accumulation of armaments, a peace which would ensure that cooperation, development and prosperity, without mistrust, confrontation and violence, prevail.

In conclusion, we should like to thank the Secretary-General for his very timely report (A/48/607), and we must also mention the invaluable support of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, under the active leadership of Ambassador Cissé of Senegal, and the praiseworthy role of the officials of the United Nations Division for Palestinian Rights.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of the United Kingdom, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. SCHROEDER (United Kingdom): I have listened to the remarks just made by the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I need hardly say that my Government does not accept the points he makes with regard to the author Salman Rushdie.

The PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that the Assembly will consider draft resolutions to be submitted under agenda item 34 at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal*.

PROGRAMME OF WORK

THE PRESIDENT: I should like to inform members that the General Assembly will take action on draft resolution A/48/L.28 on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council tomorrow morning, Friday, 3 December, as the third item.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.